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ABSTRACT

The theory of diglossia developed by Charles Ferguson in 1959, and a later, expanded version by Joshua Fishman are outlined and contrasted, and some of the major objections to them are discussed. Diglossia delineates communities using two or more linguistic varieties for differing functions within a single speech community. Ferguson's theory excluded bilingual communities, and Fishman's theory included them in certain specific conditions of language use. Fishman's contribution to the understanding of code-switching is noted, and the two theories' implications and usefulness for language planning are examined, with attention given to the potential of each for predicting attitudes toward language change. Recent language use and change patterns in the four communities illustrating Ferguson's 1959 theory (Greece, Haiti, Swiss German cantons of Switzerland, and the Arab-speaking world) are discussed in the context of the original theory and language planning. (MSE)

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REASSESSING DIGLOSSIA FOR LANGUAGE PLANNING

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In a 1959 article which was to become a classic in sociolinguistic research, Charles Ferguson proposed a descriptive category for speech communities whose language usage patterns were not adequately captured by the already familiar rubrics of bilingualism and bidialectal code-switching. This new category, which he labelled 'diglossia', delineated communities that utilized different linguistic varieties in near complete domain complementarity[1] -- that is, one code is used for one set of speech situations while a different one functions in all other contexts. To illustrate this Ferguson selected Greece, Haiti, the Swiss German speaking-cantons of Switzerland, and the Arabic-speaking world as the defining situations but suggested that diglossia was by no means confined to these localities.

Central to Ferguson's thesis was the functional differentiation of the linguistic codes within the community: Ferguson noted that a codified standard language variety, which he called the 'high' form, was used almost exclusively in formal discourse situations such as parliamentary debates, religious ceremonies, and classroom lectures; a nonstandard vernacular, to which he referred

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[1]This term is Timm's (1981).

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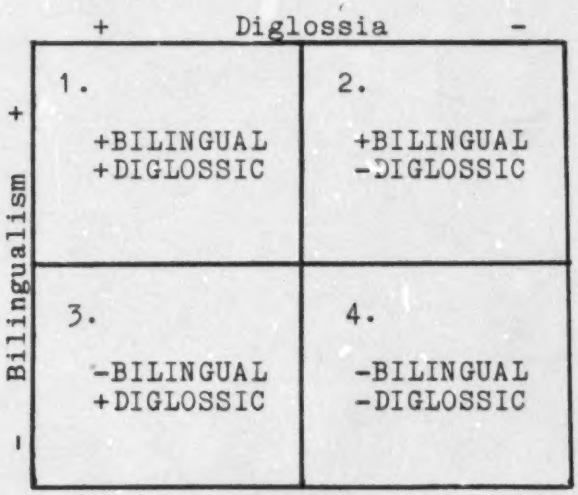
as the 'low' form, was reserved for less formal interaction including but not limited to shopping, business, and home life. He further stipulated that the two language codes bear close structural similarity to one another and that only the low vernacular form be the native variety of every speaker of the community. It is important to note here that these last two conditions severely limited the number of language contexts Ferguson considered truly diglossic. Bilingual communities would be excluded because the codes are considered separate, autonomous languages. Most bidialectal situations are also ruled out, because the standard language generally is native to at least one group of speakers, usually those from the higher socioeconomic classes or from a particular geographic locale. Several other defining criteria of diglossia were outlined by Ferguson, and some of these will be developed later in this paper. From this brief description, however, we may characterize Fergusonian diglossia as a community-wide code-switching phenomenon regulated almost completely by contextual or use-based factors; speech situations calling for spontaneous, unrehearsed language usage are carried out exclusively in the low vernacular, while nonspontaneous acts of discourse use only the codified high variety. Thus, in diglossic communities children of college professors and physicians are reared with the same nonstandard language as those of less privileged, less educated parents. Such a prospect is almost unimaginable in most bilingual and bidialectal situations, because in these communities such user-based variables as social class membership, ethnicity,

and geographic origin always play some role in shaping the language of home and hearth.

Joshua Fishman's subsequent treatment of diglossia (1967, 1972) extended the concept to a far greater range of communities than had been envisioned by Ferguson in his original article. In expanding its application Fishman was able to set up a typology of speech communities distinguished from one another by the presence and/or absence of diglossia and bilingualism. Such an arrangement renders the four-quadrant diagram shown in Figure 1.



(Fishman 1972)

FIGURE 1

Square 1, which represents locales that are both bilingual and diglossic, is exemplified by Paraguay (Rubin 1968, Fishman 1972), whose language usage patterning is shown in the dominance configuration in Figure 2. Near complete domain complementarity obtains for Spanish in formal contexts, while Guarani functions as

HYPOTHETICAL DOMINANCE CONFIGURATION
FOR THREE SPEECH COMMUNITIES

Domain	Paraguay	Belgium	Egypt
Religious Ceremonies	Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Political Speeches	Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Primary, Secondary School	Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Court Judgments, Edicts	Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Newspapers, TV, Radio	Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Work, Office	Gu,Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Personal Business	Gu,Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Casual Friendships	Gu,Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
IntimateRelationships	Gu,Sp	Fr,Fl	CA
Child Rearing	Gu,Sp	Fr,Fl	CA

KEY: Sp - Spanish Fr - French CA - Classical Arabic
Gu - Guarani Fl - Flemish DA - Dialectal Arabic

(Paraguay data from Rubin 1968, Fishman, 1972)

FIGURE 2

the primary language of the home (along with Spanish to a lesser extent). The two codes alternate to varying degrees in the other domains. Square 2 shows non-diglossic bilingual communities and is represented by Belgium. Here we see that both French and Flemish may and, in fact, do appear in all usage contexts, irrespective of the level of formality. Choice of code is generally a function of individual language competence, the speaker's audience, the topic under discussion, and the specific location within the country. Square 3, which indicates true Fergusonian diglossia, is represented in the dominance configuration by Egypt. Personal preference plays little part in the selection of code; here we note that context along dictates usage, regardless of one's education or competence in the high form. Square 4 is of little use to us, because there seem to be no known communities whose sociolinguistic

behavior is not regulated to varying degrees by either user-based (i.e., bilingual or dialectal) factors or use-based (i.e., situational) influences. Perhaps Fishman had something close to Chomsky's 'ideal speaker-hearer' relationship in mind; or perhaps he included it for the sake of symmetry and completeness.

This analysis by Fishman led to what became known as the expanded version of diglossia but, in effect, resulted in a severe narrowing of Ferguson's original definition, because as Timm (1981) quite correctly noted, Fishman equated diglossic language usage with domain complementarity. None of the other defining characteristics proposed by Ferguson in 1959 seemed particularly important or necessary. For example, he apparently rejected Ferguson's requirement that only the vernacular low variety be native to all speakers of the community. No mention of community-wide language attitudes toward the high and low forms was made, a point which is essential to Ferguson's treatment of the concept. Even in the area of domain complementarity Fishman is not entirely consistent, because, as is shown in the domain configuration for Paraguay, both Spanish and Guarani function in many of the same contexts. In my view this kind of code distribution is better accounted for by considering such user-based variables as education, age, social class membership, or even personal preference. But such an explanation is anathema to Ferguson's original notion of diglossia. Furthermore, only in nonspontaneous contexts do we see any real degree of domain complementarity. In this sense one might even argue that Fishman's expanded application of diglossia could just as well be

extended to cover a multitude of other speech communities, including the United States, since only prescriptively correct Standard English is acceptable in formal discourse domains.

It should be mentioned here that Fishman's merging of bilingualism and diglossia into the same analytical formula has unearthed some quite important features of code-switching patterning. We see at a glance that Belgian bilingual usage differs both in degree and in kind from the sort of linguistic behavior that characterizes Paraguay and most other communities as well. More important, Fishman's treatment or diglossia provides a useful framework for understanding more clearly the interaction between user-based linguistic variables, which often motivate code preference and selection among multilingual and multidialectal speakers, and use-based factors, which can programmatically account for the instantiation and function of each available code throughout the speech community.

However, Fishman's extension of diglossia into bilingual and multidialectal communities has weakened the usefulness of the term, especially for the field of language planning. Ferguson's original treatment offers valuable insights and, in addition, some measure of predictive adequacy for dealing with some of the major problem areas of language planning policy making and implementation.

Ferguson stipulated in his 1959 work that the low vernacular form of the language was either completely uncodified or only marginally so. In the case of Arabic, the colloquial language exists only as a spoken variety despite efforts on the part of some to

introduce standards of orthographic convention. None has been remotely successful. For all practical purposes this lack of codification eliminates the low form from serving as the instructional medium in the schools. And, as was noted earlier, since Ferguson's model also stipulates that the standardized high be native to no one, school children in diglossic situations do not inherit any of the minority language disadvantage that prevails in many bilingual and bidialectal areas. A related development is that active participation in the community's public life, particularly within the national political arena, is not necessarily a function of native command of a privileged local linguistic variety as can often be the case in multidialectal areas where a socially stigmatized vernacular exists. On the other hand, a whole new set of planning problems may have to be faced because of this language nativity factor. This principle of equal handicap is characteristic of Fergusonian diglossia, but no such predictions can be proffered utilizing Fishman's wider application of the term.

Language attitudes are also predictable within communities fitting Ferguson's definition as diglossic, since in every case speakers possess generally favorable predispositions toward the standardized high form and regard the vernacular as unsuitable for official status within the polity. This is especially true in the Arabic-speaking world where the low variety is viewed as a corrupt, primitive form possessing neither grammatical rules nor logical structure. While such sentiments are linguistically naive and unsound, they are revealing nonetheless. One factor which clouds

the nature of language attitudes toward high and low forms is the distinction between 'national' languages, whose significance is rooted in the cultural and historical life of the community, and 'official' languages, which serve primarily political and educational needs. Haiti provides a good example of this difference, since its national language is Creole French, but the official code is Standard French. Because this community is removed both culturally and geographically from metropolitan France, Haitians' attitudes toward Standard French may well be substantively different from the sentiments Egyptians hold for Standard Arabic, the linguistic code which is both the national and official language of that country. Nevertheless, both groups view the low variety in somewhat similar manners, and it is unlikely that the local vernacular will ever achieve official language status. Either the nonnative high form or a standardized hybrid variety which combines structural elements from both high and low (and which is also nonnative) will emerge. Again, generalizations about vernacular language attitudes are possible using Ferguson's formula but not Fishman's.

The development of new vocabulary items to meet the growing technical and scientific needs of the twentieth century is a potential problem for every language, but with diglossia the difficulties can be compounded by highly normative attitudes toward the structure of the standardized high form. Ferguson states in his article that in diglossic communities: "There is an established norm for pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary which allows varia-

tion only within certain limits." (p. 239) Prestige, literary heritage, and codification of the high form all contribute to this feeling. Enriching the impoverished lexical base of languages in many Third World areas is one of the chief components of language modernization. In Arab society today, for example, there are concepts, commercial practices, and scientific discoveries for which no Semitically-based words exist. While there is little hesitation to import this technology, Arabs often are resistent to accept the already conventionalized Western terminology. Ferguson's treatment of diglossia implicitly predicted this problem of lexical expansion because of concerns for purism in the high form. Wexler (1971) has characterized Standard Arabic as a closed linguistic system, one which expands and amends its lexical treasury through morphological transpositions, calques, and analogy. Arabized foreign entries often are discouraged because they contaminate the underlying system of triliteral roots. The vernacular low, which Wexler termed a relatively open system, is much more receptive to foreign-based neologisms, since the puristic concerns suggested by Ferguson are either nonexistent or play no significant role in its development. But receptivity of foreignisms into the low will not alleviate the critical vocabulary shortage found in Classical Arabic. Because domain complementarity generally dictates that many of these topics be discussed and used in contexts reserved for the standard variety only, the high form remains lexically impoverished, and a growing gap between technology and nomenclature seems to be materializing.

Another factor which relates to language planning is an assessment of the nature and degree of social cohesion which obtains throughout the community. To the extent that minority languages and dialects contribute to division within the polity, it is the goal of policy makers to engineer language programs which do not aggravate any already existing tensions or further disenfranchise some disadvantaged element of the population. Diglossic communities with their concomitant principle of equal handicap seem to be spared from language-caused splits of this nature. In fact, one might argue that in locales meeting Ferguson's characterization of diglossia national unity may even be enhanced by the community-wide acceptance of one vernacular code. Where social division within diglossic communities is a factor in policy selection and implementation, its causes likely are not rooted in local language differences.

A good deal of interest and scholarly debate has been aroused by the appearance of Ferguson's article in 1959 and by Fishman's reanalysis several years later. Some of the major objections to the expanded interpretation have already been outlined; brief attention is directed now toward some problems and questions raised by the original version. The first relates to style switching in diglossic communities.

Implicit in Ferguson's treatment is the stylistic jump speakers must make as they move from formal discourse situations to more spontaneous, informal ones. There is no provision for a smooth transition from prescriptively correct high to nonstandard

low. In effect, one can envision a quantum leap from standard to vernacular as the context changes, and we can imagine also that diglossic speakers are locked into a predetermined stylistic level that may change only when the speech situation itself is altered. Such verbal behavior is, of course, hardly expected in normal speech. Haim Blanc (1960) conducted research on conversational patterns of Arabic speakers and from that was able to identify not only a low colloquial and a high classical but three intermediate style levels as well. Moreover, he noted that language usage did not involve sudden stylistic jumps from one level to the next; rather, these speakers seemed to move up and down a fluid continuum. Blanc found that "once one gets beyond homespun conversation in relaxed colloquial ... it is the exception rather than the rule to find any sustained segment of discourse in a single one of the style varieties alluded to. Speakers tends to pass from one to the other, sometimes within a single sentence..." (p. 85) In observing the speech patterns of French-Arabic bilingual Tunisians Mohamed Maamouri (1973) uncovered analogous findings. To what extent does this undermine Ferguson's original argument of near complete functional differentiation of linguistic codes? In my view, not very much. Style shifting and even the deliberate breaking of expected rules of speech are components of effective communication in any context. We accept this as part of one's overall competence as a speaker. It is implausible to infer that Ferguson's intention was to account for idiosyncratic verbal strategies across a large speech community. Rather, it was to

erect a functional matrix of usage patterns which programmatically linked situational formality to the level of speech, irrespective of user variables. To this end his insights remain valid.

Another factor which deserves attention is the stability of diglossia and the long-range future of this phenomenon. Ferguson was justified in predicting that Switzerland will retain its diglossic character for an indefinite period, but the futures of the other three defining communities are hazier. In Greece an intermediate language appears to be emerging to bridge the gap between the Demotic low and the almost artificially high Katharevousa. Personal communication with several native Greek speakers has offered conflicting opinions about the functional nature of this middle form. Should this new variety take root in Greece (and there is much speculation about this), it is unclear whether it would merely replace the older high in all but the most formal contexts, or if it would be extended also into many informal domains. Neither of these possibilities would alter the overall diglossic character of the country unless, of course, this middle form became native to some segment of the population. Hawkins (1983) suggested that diglossia is still very much alive in Greece.

In the Arab world there have been efforts taken to simplify the high classical form and rid it of many of its cumbersome grammatical features. Such a move, were it successful, would facillitate mastery of the high form but, as in Greece, would still preserve the basic diglossic nature of the community. Whether regional standards will replace the classical high in secular usage

domains is a faint possibility. Lexical expansion and modernization of the high seems to be the primary area of focus for the three Arabic language academies. In fact, functional reallocation of Colloquial and Classical Arabic has never been a subject of any serious discussion.

The Haitian situation is perhaps the most interesting for language planners, because there are some on the island who command near native competence in a form of Standard French (Morris Goodman, personal communication), and, according to Valdman (1968), some success has been achieved in creating an accepted orthographic system for the low Creole variety. Full codification still seems a ways off, but competence in the standard high is rising, albeit slowly. What will be interesting in the years to come is gauging the effect of increased literacy on the overall stability of Haitian diglossia. More study is needed in this area.

One complaint which could lodged against Ferguson's analysis is the dissimilarity of his four defining communities. The sociolinguistic profiles of each makes them sui generis. However, this is a minor flaw which in no way weakens his basic argument nor undermines the value of diglossia as a tool in language planning policy making. His treatment of the concept makes diglossia a most useful term for linguists interested in the relationship between social structure and selection of the code. It should be retained in its original form until a model with greater predictive adequacy is advanced. Thus far none has appeared.

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